



Physiotherapy Committee of Brazilian Headache Society is represented in the Physiotherapy Specialist Interest Group

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The increasing recognition of physiotherapy in the field of headache reflects the evolving understanding of its contribution to the management of these complex and multifactorial conditions. Initially focused on treating musculoskeletal dysfunctions associated with cervicogenic and tension-type headaches, physiotherapy has progressively expanded its scope, particularly in the context of migraine. This advancement has recently culminated in the establishment of a Special Interest Group within the International Headache Society, reinforcing physiotherapy as an essential, evidence-based approach in the interdisciplinary care of headache disorders. In this editorial, we discuss the recent milestones of this movement, the challenges, and opportunities ahead, and the future of international collaboration between physiotherapists and other professionals involved in headache management.

Over the past decades, physiotherapy has been gaining increasing recognition and prominence in headache research, recently culminating in the establishment of a special interest group (SIG) within the world's leading headache society, the International Headache Society (IHS). This milestone was documented in a recent editorial by Luedtke et al. (1).

In 2023, *Musculoskeletal Science and Practice* published a special issue on "Headache and neck pain" in response to the growing interest and expanding body of research led by physiotherapists in this field worldwide. The editorial accompanying this special issue highlighted that Physiotherapy was initially associated primarily with musculoskeletal dysfunctions in cervicogenic headache and tension-type headache (2). However, as research in this area has progressed, the role of Physiotherapy in the assessment and management of headache episodes—particularly in migraine patients—has become increasingly evident. Recent studies indicate that both neck pain and postural imbalances are highly prevalent in this population and contribute significantly to disability, especially among patients with chronic migraine and migraine with aura (3,4).

The guest editors of the headache special issue, Prof. Kerstin Luedtke, Prof. Debora Bevilaqua-Grossi and Dr. Zhiqi Liang, together with the journals' then co-editor Prof. Gwendolen Jull continued their collaboration and presented a Focussed Symposium at International Federation of Orthopaedic Manipulative Physical Therapists - IFOMPT 24 in Basel. It was at this meeting that we thought it was timely and of significant benefit to combine forces and create an international platform for physiotherapists with clinical or research interests in headache (1). Recognizing the growing relevance of Physiotherapy in headache management, the group proposed the creation of a special interest group within the IHS. A formal document was submitted outlining the integration of Physiotherapy into non-pharmacological care strategies for headache patients and emphasizing its contributions within a multidisciplinary team.

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The International Headache Society (IHS) was pleased to offer this platform and we have become founding members. This is the ideal forum for physiotherapists to benefit from and contribute to the multidisciplinary knowledge, practice and research into headache. Hence physiotherapists are invited to join the IHS and to join the special interest group (SIG) for Physiotherapy. The aims and planned activities of the SIG are (1):

- Formulate position statements on current evidence for the contribution of physiotherapy assessment and treatment to the care of patients with i) migraine, ii) tension type headaches, iii) cervicogenic headache and (iv) other headaches with cervical or temporomandibular musculoskeletal components e.g. headache associated with temporomandibular dysfunction/orofacial pain.
- Recommend minimum educational international standards for physiotherapy training programs
- Offer postgraduate specialised training in headache differential diagnosis and management, relevant to physiotherapy management
- Stimulate international research collaborations to investigate the influence of musculoskeletal structures and physiotherapy-related research questions focussing on mechanisms and therapies for cervicogenic, tension-type, migraine and other headaches with a cervical or orofacial musculoskeletal component.
- Contribute to the international and interprofessional profile and membership of the International Headache Society and its World conferences.
- Disseminate information about the burden of headache, planning research projects and designing strategies that contribute to the proposition of public policies to reduce the impact of headaches on the population and improve the healthcare for headache.

To mark the beginning of this important initiative, an open international online inaugural meeting of the IHS Physiotherapy SIG will take place on **Thursday, 10th of April 2025 at 10am GMT** and all physiotherapists with clinical or research interests in headache are invited to join. The title of the meeting is **"A physiotherapy Special Interest Group in headache – why is it needed?"** and Prof. Kerstin Luedtke, Prof. Debora Bevilaqua-Grossi, Dr. Zhiqi Liang and Prof. Gwendolen Jull will discuss the case for the need for a special group. There will be time for questions and a discussion about the future activities of the group.

This is the link to register for the webinar: <https://ihs-headache.org/en/news/ihs-webinar-on-physiotherapy-10-april-14-00-gmt/>

You do not need to become a member of the International Headache Society to join the webinar, but if you wish to join the society, there is a reduced rate for physical therapists ("Allied member"), you will find all information here: <https://ihs-headache.org/en/membership-signup/>.

The first presential meeting of this special interest group will take place during the International Headache Congress, which, for

the first time and marking a historic moment, will be held in Latin America, from September 10 to 13, in São Paulo, Brazil.

Aligned with the IHS, the Brazilian Headache Society has established a Physiotherapy Committee, composed of Prof. Debora Bevilaqua-Grossi, Prof. Daniella Araújo de Oliveira e Prof. Michelle Dias Santos Santiago, professionals committed to the multidisciplinary care of headache patients. The committee's main objectives are as follows:

- To foster collaboration between Neurology and Physiotherapy in headache management, with a particular focus on the musculoskeletal and functional implications of these conditions.
- To provide healthcare professionals with the latest scientific evidence on the assessment and physiotherapeutic treatment of headache patients, ensuring a patient-centered approach.
- To develop and disseminate guidelines and recommendations in the field of Physiotherapy for headache management, strengthening evidence-based practice.
- To encourage the active participation of physiotherapists within the Brazilian Headache Society, facilitating access to reliable updates and opportunities for continued professional development in headache care.
- To contribute to the training and ongoing education of physiotherapists, enhancing their expertise in headache management to help reduce the burden of this condition on affected individuals and the broader population.

An important initiative of the Brazilian Physiotherapy Committee will be the organization of the international workshop **"Physiotherapy and Headaches – From Science to Practice"**. The event will take place in Campinas-SP from **September 5 to 7, 2025**, preceding the International Headache Congress.

We look forward to this new task, meeting like-minded physiotherapists and fostering an international network of experts in the field of headache.

References

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